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Weepers Instructed.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE FUNERAL

OF

Mrs. Abigail Woolsey Welles Ludlow,

WIFE OF THE

REV. H. G. LUDLOW,

Friday, March 2d, 1849.

BY

REV. SUMNER MANDEVILLE.

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Rev. S. Mandeville—

Very Dear Brother: Accept my heart-felt thanks for your truly excellent discourse, delivered at the funeral of my departed wife. You will gratify me very much, as well as a large circle of friends, by consenting to its publication.

Your affectionate, and afflicted Brother,

H. G. LUDLOW.

Rev. H. G. Ludlow—

Dear Brother: The following discourse was prepared in great haste, as such discourses generally must be, and delivered by the writer under a deep sense of being inadequate to the occasion. Yet I have yielded to a request for its publication, because I know that a funeral sermon often has a value with the friends and acquaintances of the dead, which its intrinsic merits would not give it, being embalmed with the precious memory of the friend whose death it records.

Affectionately yours,

S. MANDEVILLE.

SERMON.

1 Cor. 7: 30. *"And they that weep as though they wept not."*

In answering some inquiries from the church at Corinth the Apostle speaks of the advantages and disadvantages of the married state; gives some particular directions in regard to relative duties, and then abruptly breaks forth in an earnest exhortation to keep in mind the brevity and uncertainty of all earthly things, and to live constantly in view of an approaching eternity. "But this I say brethren, the time is short. It remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Our sojourn here will at most be but transitory. No condition or relationship of life can affect us but momentarily. Time is on the wing. All our pains and our pleasures, our joys and sorrows, will soon be ended. Whilst, therefore, he would enjoin upon them affectionately to discharge the duties of the domestic circle, he would have them remember how liable this scene is to change; how soon the tenderest ties must be sundered: therefore, "let those that have wives be as though they had none." Bereavements must come; the most endeared friends must be parted; those that rejoice to-day must weep to-morrow. But if joys are evanescent, sorrows are also transient:—"the time is short; let those that weep be as though they wept not."

Let us endeavor to improve the subject and the solemn occasion which has brought us together, by considering, briefly,

I. The fact implied in the text, that we are liable to sorrows in the present state.

II. The spirit which is here recommended.

I. We are liable to sorrows in the present state. Suffering and sorrow are the lot of mortals. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and *full* of trouble." He hastens through the world, weighed down with grief and suffering. This whole earth is a

Bochim—a vale of tears. In consequence of sin, "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Pain quickly follows every pleasure. Tears soon bedew the countenance, which for a moment is lighted with the smile of joy; and from this common lot of mortals, the most devoted Christians are not exempt. "In the world ye *shall* have tribulation." Even the immaculate Son of God himself, when he assumed the "likeness of sinful flesh," "became a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

Our sources of sorrow are innumerable. We are vulnerable at all points; we are exposed in all situations. High or low, rich or poor, young or old; wherever we are, or whatever may be our circumstances, from the cradle to the grave, sorrows and sufferings abide us.

Let us consider, briefly, three or four sources of this sorrow.

Our Worldly affairs, often occasion us sorrows. In the various pursuits of life we are often led into difficulties and trials; we meet with losses and are subjected to privations; our plans are frustrated and our expectations are cut off; all our wordly employments are pursued amid constant disappointment, vexation and care. Even those who pursue their business most temperately and properly, are still laboring in a world, which, under the curse of the Creator, *bringeth forth briars and thorns*, and they are consequently often *pierced through with many sorrows*. "Those that buy should be as though they possessed not."

Our dying bodies present another fruitful source of suffering. We come into the world with bodies sentenced to the grave and tending to corruption. Those who can say "to corruption thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my sister," should anticipate but little bodily *ease* or comfort. But there are many in this suffering world peculiarly afflicted. Seldom if ever free from pain, they never pass a day of perfect health, or of uninterrupted physical enjoyment. They have bodies so frail and nerves so delicately strung that every change affects them, every wind that blows gives them suffering; "they never eat with pleasure;" when they lie down, it is in pain, so that "they make their bed to swim, and water their couch with tears." The morning brings no ease, and the labors of the day are performed amid pain and suffering—God "feedeth them with tears and giveth them tears to drink in great measure." Thus "we groan in this tabernacle, being burdened," until these mortal bodies are laid

down to moulder in the grave, and the disembodied spirit enters upon the untried scenes of another world.

Our domestic relations, whilst we derive from them our sweetest, purest earthly enjoyments, from them also come our deepest sorrows. However endeared the objects of our affection, and tender the tie which binds together husbands and wives, parents and children, it must be torn asunder. Death pays no regard to the hallowedness of the domestic circle; neither is it tender of that which may seem to us most needful for our happiness. It quenches the light of the dwelling, and renders cold and desolate the home of the fondest affection. The object which seems to us most dear and indispensable, is often the first upon which death lays his icy hand. The staff is snatched from the aged, the guide is struck down before the inexperienced, or the support of the helpless and feeble is laid in the dust. How often are we summoned to the grave! If our own hearts are not desolated, or crushed by some sore bereavement, we are called to weep from sympathy with others. "Mourners go about the streets."

"Friend after friend departs—
Who hath not lost a friend?
There is no union here of hearts
That finds not here an end."

In addition to the sorrows, to which all mankind are alike exposed, *the Christian has sorrows of a spiritual nature.* When the wicked scoff the Christian weeps—he weeps when the thoughtless laugh; he mourns over his own barrenness and coldness in the service of God. Oftentimes he goes weighed down under a sense of his sinfulness, and short comings; he pours out his tears, and "weeps in secret places," when no eye but God's can see him. It is often the case that the more humble, devoted and conscientious the Christian is, the more he weeps on account of his unworthiness. Satan is often permitted to buffet and try him—"he goes mourning because of the oppression of the enemy," or else he is trembling under a sense of the solemn responsibilities resting upon him.

Again, the eye of the Christian is often filled with tears on account of the spiritual condition of his nearest and dearest friends. They may be strangers to God, and enemies in their hearts to the blessed Saviour. He sees them ungrateful for the daily goodness of God, and unaffected even by that amazing love which gave his Son to

die for us. He knows also that whilst they are thus sinning against God, they are destroying their own souls. These reflections often cause him to weep, and pray for them by day and by night. The sorest trial, and the heaviest burden which often weighs down the hearts of Christian parents, is to see their children living without hope, and without God in the world. Especially is this the case with pious Mothers. God, in the constitution of human society, in that pure and undying love, and the refined sensibilities which he has given the Mother, seems to have designed she should bear upon her heart an overwhelming sense of responsibility for the temporal and spiritual welfare of her children. For this her "head is waters and her eyes a fountain of tears." If she weeps when others rejoice, it is for her children; if she weeps on her dying pillow, and would wait awhile longer before she meets her Saviour, it is for her children.

The Christian also weeps for a world that lieth in wickedness around him. Like the Psalmist, he can often say, "rivers of waters run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law."

These are some of the sources of our sorrows in this world. From sorrows none are exempt, and from sorrows of one kind or another none can escape. We are prone to feel that our own lot is the most trying and unhappy, and envy the condition of others who, we imagine, are in more favored circumstances. But how often are the most envied, in reality, the most wretched. Every "heart knoweth his own bitterness;" but who can say he has no cause to weep?

II. Let us consider, briefly, the spirit recommended in the text, in regard to weeping.

We may observe here, that we are not commanded to refrain from weeping, but to weep *as though we wept not.* It is not declared to be sinful, or improper, that our tears should flow when God lays his chastening hand upon us. Tears are the natural and involuntary expression of the sorrows we feel. Weeping has been sanctified, so to speak, by the tears of Prophets and Apostles; yea more, by the tears of the Son of God himself, for "Jesus wept." Religion is not designed to harden the heart, or to make men stoics; it does not blunt the finer feelings, or stifle the tender affections of human nature. On the contrary, it elevates and refines the affections; makes the heart more tender and affectionate, and the sensibilities more exquisite. To be without "natural affection," is the characteristic of those who

are *without God*, and not of the Christian. The same man loves with a stronger and more tender affection, if he is a devoted and heavenly minded Christian than if he is a stranger to God, and a supreme *lover of self*. The husband and wife, bound together, not only by the common affection of unrenewed hearts, but by the strong ties of Christian love, which makes them one in Christ Jesus, feel far more keenly when those bonds are torn asunder, than they would, if their affection had not been sanctified and endeared by united love to God. Pure religion—the love of God—spreads over all our social relations a sacredness, a sweetness, a blessedness allied to the love of heaven, and gives us a foretaste of perfect bliss.

Still, although it is right and suitable that we should weep, we may weep in an improper manner, and with a spirit highly reprehensible. *We do this when our weeping prevents us from going forward in the discharge of the various duties devolving upon us in life.* When we sit down to mourn, and give ourselves up to grief, as though that was our business, as many are prone to do, forgetting our own souls, the duties we owe our friends and the world, then our weeping is wrong and grieving to the Spirit of God. But when "by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better;" when tears sanctify our affections, quicken us in duty, make us more watchful unto prayer; we may be said to "*weep as though we wept not.*" It does not dim our eye of faith. It throws no obstacles in the way of duty; nor causes us to stumble or falter in the Christian race.

We weep improperly when the mind *dwells exclusively on its troubles and afflictions, forgetting the mercies and blessings which remain.* How prone is the human heart to do this. God bestows ten thousand unmerited blessings upon us, and when he takes one away, we are at once overwhelmed with affliction,—*no sorrow is like unto our sorrow*,—we can scarcely think, or feel as though we had one mercy left: Like Jacob of old, *we refuse to be comforted, and resolve to go down to the grave mourning.* Oh! what ungrateful beings we are, toward the Giver of all our mercies! If He takes away one, of all the unnumbered blessings which are His own free gift, though he is ready to bestow himself in place of it, we are ready *to faint under his rebukes*, and yield to consuming sorrow.

Again, we weep improperly, *when we feel or exhibit a murmuring spirit.* This the unrenewed heart is sure to do, when God takes away the idols of its affection; and an entirely subdued, resigned

spirit under the afflictive dispensations of Divine Providence, is a lesson exceedingly hard even for a Christian to learn. He has made no small attainments in the divine life, who can say from his heart, when God sweeps away his comforts, and makes his dwelling desolate, "the Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." Such an one can weep as though he wept not; and his tears will neither injure his own soul nor grieve the Spirit of God.

But let us consider some of the reasons why all our sorrows should be moderate, or that we should "weep as though we wept not."

The first and prominet reason, which I will mention is, *because it is God who lays affliction upon us.* Many of our afflictions are directly from his hand. Eminently is this the case, when by death he calls us to weep for the loss of friends. We are all his creatures, and by his unalterable decree all must die; the time and the manner, he has not revealed, but enjoined it upon us to be always ready. True it is that the dispensations of his providence in this respect are sometimes dark, and mysterious, and calculated to try severely our faith, and submission to his Sovereign will; but on the other hand, we know that he is infinitely wise and good, and that all he does is right. We know that while "clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." We are assured also that as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,"—he "afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men,"—he never takes a friend from us, but when he sees it is absolutely for the best,—he lays not one sorrow more upon his children than is necessary for his own glory and their best welfare. "He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust." When, therefore, we consider that all our sorrows are from the hand of such a Father, ordered by infinite wisdom and infinite goodness, though *rivers of waters should run down our eyes,* shall we not smile through our tears and be as though we wept not? When a covenant God of such wisdom and love orders all the circumstances of our trials and bereavements, can we not bow with sweet submission to his will and say, "it is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good?"

Another reflection which ought to moderate our grief, is, that *we deserve much more severe affliction than we receive.* However numerous may be our trials, or heavy our sorrows, our sins are far more numerous, and call for still more severe chastisements. For

the Lord "hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy to them that fear him." "It is of the Lord's mercies"—and not because we *deserve* anything less at his hands—"that we are not consumed." Instead then of murmuring, we should be ready to raise our weeping eyes to heaven, and exclaim, "why should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins."

Another reason why our sorrows should not be excessive, is *because of the consolations provided for us.* "God is our refuge, a present help in every time of trouble." "Call upon me—he says—in the day of trouble and I will answer thee." His grace is pledged to his people, and is abundantly sufficient to sustain them in all their sorrows. Oh, what a blessed consolation that God, even our God, will be with us in all our afflictions; and will sustain and sanctify the souls of those who trust in him. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the deep waters, they shall not overflow thee." If he brings us through the furnace, it is that we may come forth as gold purified in the fire. If our sorrows are multiplied, it is that our consolations through his grace may more abound. As tender parents feel their hearts yearning with the strongest sympathy and tenderness towards their suffering children, *so the Lord pitieth them that fear him,* he counts all their tears, and his ear is ever open to their cry. His blessed presence is peculiarly near to such *as are broken in heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit.* He promises moreover, that all our afflictions here shall work for us *an eternal weight of glory hereafter*—that our greatest trials may turn to be our greatest blessings, and our heaviest crosses shall but brighten our crowns in glory. To the wicked, every dispensation is a judgment. They have no real good. Their sweetest enjoyments must turn to gall and wormwood; their richest blessings will prove the heaviest weights to sink them in the pit of destruction. But to the sincere child of God every event, every pain, and every sorrow is an ultimate blessing. *All things work together for their good.* Every sorrow will increase their endless joys; every trial will brighten their eternal crown. Let then the suffering child of God, bowed down with sorrows, and broken in heart though he be, look up to the throne, and say—my Father it is good for me that I am afflicted—I will kiss the rod and him who hath appointed it—I will behave myself as a weaned child,—and though all thy waves and

thy billows pass over me, I will remember my Father's love, and praise thee for thy grace.

I will mention one reason more why our sorrows should be borne with cheerfulness,—*they will be short.* All our trials and sufferings here must be short; for life itself passes like the weaver's shuttle. "Our light afflictions which are *but for a moment*"—says the Apostle. O! what are a few fleeting hours, or a few days of weeping here, compared with that eternity before us? Our sorrows are so transient, so light, so like nothing, they can form no comparison with that *eternal weight of glory to be revealed in us.* "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." Our sorrows are like passing clouds, so flitting and transient we scarcely get time to drop our tears before the sun breaks forth in its endless glory upon us. Oh! I have often thought, how amazed we shall be, how we shall wonder at ourselves, when we enter upon eternal scenes, to think that we should ever have been disturbed by any affliction or trial which could take place in a period so so short as are the scenes of earth.

Death separates the dearest friends and rends our hearts with anguish, but Oh, how soon he will unite us again, where separations never take place, and sorrows are unknown. Shall we repine that our dearest Christian friends have ceased from toil and sorrow and entered into glory a moment before us? *They will scarcely have time to dry their weeping eyes, and attune their harps to the melodies of heaven, ere we shall follow them.* O! let this comfort our broken and bereaved hearts, and if we weep, let it be as though we wept not. Let us gird up our loins, trim our lamps, and prepare to join those who have just gone before, in their everlasting song of gratitude and praise to Him who hath saved us from all our afflictions.

We are called to-day to sympathise, and weep with those, who weep under a sore and trying bereavement. Our dear sister is gone. She sleeps in Jesus, and, as we have every reason to believe, has entered upon her song of joy where tears are wiped from every eye. She has been called to her rest, whilst yet in the midst of her days; for she had but just entered upon her fiftieth year.

In the year 1827 she made a public profession of her faith in Christ, in the Spring Street Church, New York, under the labors of our now afflicted and mourning brother. In 1829 she became his bosom com-

panion; and has been a devoted wife, a self-sacrificing mother, the sharer of his joys and sorrows, and the light of his home for almost twenty years. But God has seen fit to take her from her labors and sufferings,—from her beloved family and friends, to her everlasting rest.

Her piety was humble, steady, and unostentatious—that of a sinner shut up to the Cross of Christ. It was not of a blazing fitful character, like a meteor, now dazzling us with its brilliancy, and then disappearing in almost utter darkness; but like the mild and steady light which shines even on, until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away. She ever had a deep and humbling sense of her own unworthiness, and of her entire dependence upon the atoning merits of Christ. Ever watchful, prayerful, and always at what she conceived to be the post of duty, she lived an humble and steady follower of the meek and lowly Jesus. Her long continued physical debility, combined perhaps with her natural temperament, led her to be habitually desponding, and to esteem herself as "the least of all saints." In reviewing the night before her death, her evidences of a gracious state, she thought that she did love God—that she did sincerely love true Christians, and that she did rejoice in the triumphs of Christ's cause everywhere.

She was one of God's greatly afflicted ones. For many years she has scarcely known what physical ease and comfort were. She labored with a body prostrated and suffering; and laid herself down to sleep in pain. No regimen, nor varying seasons, or change of place could give her health; wherever she lived, wherever she went pain and suffering abided her. Ever patient and resigned, and for a great portion of the time confined at home, few knew how much she suffered. When I think how much she has endured through life, in consequence of this diseased mortal frame, I am ready to exclaim "Oh, thou afflicted—sister—tossed with tempest and not comforted," thy God has healed all thy diseases, dried all thy tears, and called thee to his blessed and glorious rest.

She was remarkable for her deep and abiding sense of parental responsibility. Her children were always upon her heart, and she felt the worth of their immortal souls. She felt that God had committed them to her, to train for heaven; and that he would soon require an account of the manner in which she had discharged her momentous trust. With all her physical prostration and suffering,

she devoted herself with untiring assiduity to them. For her children she watched, for them she labored, for them she read, she wept, she prayed, she died.

As the wife of a minister, conscious that she had no strength to labor abroad, she sought to relieve her husband from cares and anxieties at home, that *he* might give himself entirely to the work of the ministry; and here she found enough, and more than enough for her heart and feeble hands to perform. "She looked well to the ways of her household;" and here at all times, in season and out of season, she was ready to greet with a kind and generous welcome, his ministerial brethren. Often has the speaker called at most unexpected, and even unseasonable times, and always, if she was able at all to rise from her couch of pain, he has met the same kind and cheerful reception. Her feeble health, and sense of duty to her family united to make her from necessity and from choice a "keeper at home,"—a silent, self-sacrificing spirit to her home duties. For these reasons she was less known, and her influence was less publicly felt in the Church than it otherwise would have been.

She is gone. An overwhelming bereavement to her husband,—an irreparable loss to her children. But God has taken her; and he has done it just at the time, and in the way which infinite wisdom has seen was best. One thing we ought to mention to the glory of God's grace. Our departed sister through all her life had a constitutional and indescribable dread of death; not so much the fear of *being dead*, as of *dying itself*. An appalling sense of the fearful struggle which separates the soul from the body. This has frequently been the case, with God's children. But I have never heard of a case, in which God did not sustain and entirely relieve them when he actually called them to pass the Jordan of death. He has promised *us strength according to our day*—but he does not always give us dying faith until we are called to die; then he never leaves or forsakes the Saint who trusts in him. So with our sister. The evening before her death, though not aware her end was so near, her mind was greatly relieved in this respect, and when she came to die, she quietly went to sleep; and ere she was aware that her feet had touched the cold waters of Jordan, her freed spirit was basking in the "sweet fields beyond the swelling flood."

Dear Brother, God has greatly afflicted you. He has taken away "the desire of your eyes." He has bereaved you of your bosom

friend and companion. He has taken from your children their unwearied guardian; from your table its head; from your home its light and life. When you return from the grave to your dwelling, your heart will be desolate—your dear children will be motherless—your *home* will be gone. But would you, my dear brother, call back that dear departed spirit, to groan again in this diseased, painful, suffering body; even if by one wish you could cause it to animate again this cold clay? Oh, no! I am sure you would not; even though your heart may be ready to break. No, certainly not, if you could ascend with the entranced Tennent until you could catch a glimpse of the glorified spirits, and the sweet and soul ravishing melodies which none but those in perfect bliss can sing. Not if you could ascend with Paul to the third heavens, to hear those ineffable strains of hallelujah to God and the Lamb, *which it is not lawful for man to utter.* Oh, no, you would exclaim, not for a world, thou released, rapt spirit, would I call thee back to be again an heir of pain and suffering. But my dear brother, what will you do? You will take these dear little ones, and go where the mother has so often been with them; and you will beseech the God of the mother, to be the God of the children; you will plead with him to fill your vacant house with his blessed presence; you will entreat him to grant you abundant supplies of his grace, to bear the increased responsibilities devolving upon you; and to enable you to toil on for a little while longer, with a nearer and clearer view of eternity. Then though you weep it will be as though you wept not; and you will gird up your loins and strive to live more for heaven.

Your ministering brethren can weep with you; and I speak for them all when I say you have our heart-felt sympathies. But that will avail you little. We will bear you to the Throne of Grace; we will beseech God to comfort and bless you—to purify you in the furnace, and sanctify you for his service—and be a covenant God to you and yours—to go before you in the cloud, and give you songs in the night.

Let me address a word to this Church and congregation. My friends, your Pastor has often visited your houses in seasons of joy, and of affliction. He has been to the bedsides of your sick and dying to impart instruction and consolation. He has gone with your dead to the grave; and then has gone home to his closet to plead that God would give you consolation, and sanctify your afflictions to you.

Now the iron has extered into his own soul, and "the hand of God hath touched him." Will you do for him as he has done for you? Bear him and his motherless children on your hearts at the Throne of Grace. Now, if ever, he will need your sympathies and your prayers. He has wept, when you have wept, and rejoiced in your joy. Do not forget him, now that he is in deep waters, and his soul is made to drink of the bitter cup. Gather around him with your sympathies; bear him to the Throne of Grace in your prayers, and do all you can to endure with him the heavy burden which God has laid upon him; and ere long you shall rejoice together before the Throne.